

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 15369 291240Z

44

ACTION EA-10

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INFO COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK TH

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 15369

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ASEAN, SEATO, TH, US, CH, PN, CB

SUBJECT: THANAT KHOMAN ON THE NEW SOUTHEAST ASIAN EQUATION

REF: FBIS BK 280430Y AND ADDS

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: THE REFERENCED FBIS ITEM CARRIES THE FULL TEXT OF A JULY 28 INTERVIEW BETWEEN FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT KHOMAN AND BANGKOK POST EDITOR-IN-CHIEF THEH CHONGKHADIKIT. IN THIS INTERVIEW THANAT REVERSES HIMSELF YET AGAIN. HE CLAIMS THAT WHILE IN THE PAST HE HAS ADVOCATED THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES FROM THAILAND, HE DID NOT HAVE IN MIND A UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF THE SORT THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT HAS MADE. THANAT STATES THAT THE RTG SHOULD HAVE KEYED THE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES TO SOME TANGIBLE NORTH VIETNAMESE CONCESSIONS.

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 15369 291240Z

2. REGARDING THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT, THANAT BELIEVES THAT THAILAND SHOULD NOT HAVE MARRED THE BASICALLY SATISFACTORY THAI-17.S. RELATIONSHIP BY ITS STRONG PUBLICLY NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE U.S. RECOVERY EFFORTS.

3. THANAT GOES ON AT SOME LENGTH TO DESCRIBE THE POST-INDOCHINA SITUATION AS A COMPLETELY NEW EQUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE SAYS THAT, "THE UNITED STATES HAS COME TO A POINT OF ALMOST TOTAL DISENGAGEMENT FROM THE MAINLAND OF SOUTHEAST ASIA. . . ." HE GOES ON TO SAY THAT AMERICA'S NEW "PERIPHERAL DEFENSE POLICY" OF KEEPING A STRONG FOOTHOLD ON THE ISLANDS BORDERING MAINLAND ASIA IS NOT A TENABLE OR VALID POLICY.

4. REGARDING SEATO, THANAT SAYS THAT IT HAS BEEN ONLY A SHADOW OF ITSELF FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS BUT THAT A FACADE IS BETTER THAN NOTHING AT ALL. HE GOES ON TO COMMEND THE UHUKRIT GOV ERNMENT FOR INCREASING THAILAND'S PARTICIPATION IN ASEAN, BUT DISCOUNTS ASEAN'S ULTIMATE POTENTIAL AS A MUTUAL SECURITY ORGANIZATION. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: THANAT BEGAN PUBLICLY EXPRESSING HIS HERETICAL STAND MAY 27 WHEN HE APPEARED AS ONE OF THE PANELISTS AT THE UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES MEETING ON "THAILAND AND THE INDOCHINA CRISIS." THANAT'S PUBLISHED VIEWS IN THE POST CORRESPOND QUITE CLOSELY TO A CONVERSATION HE HAD WITH THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR JULY 23# AT THAT TIME, HE CRITICIZED PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT FOR "BUNGLING" THAI HANDLING OF THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT, AND PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT MARCOS FOR REVERSING HIMSELF ON THE ISSUE OF THE U.S. PRESENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES AND PHILIPPINE POLICY TOWARD SEATO. IN DEFENDING HIS OWN REVERSALS ON THE DESIRABILITY OF THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE, THANAT SAID THAT THE FALL OF INDOCHINA CREATED A NEW SITUATION WHICH GAVE HIM A RIGHT TO CHANGE HIS OWN MIND.
WHITEHOUSE

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